



Agenda Item 3

Minute

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Minute of meeting of the Executive held at the Grangemouth Community Education Unit on Thursday 23 January 2025 at 10.00 a.m.

Councillors: Gary Bouse
James Bundy
William Buchanan
Bryan Deakin
Stacey Devine
Paul Garner
Anne Hannah
James Kerr
Cecil Meiklejohn (Convener)
Laura Murtagh
Alan Nimmo
Siobhan Paterson
Jack Redmond
Iain Sinclair
Robert Spears

Officers: Karen Algie, Director of Transformation, Communities & Corporate Services
Malcolm Bennie, Director of Place Services
Deborah Davidson, Head of Education
Alistair Dawson, Infrastructure Projects Manager
Paul Ferguson, Senior Service Manager, Housing & Communities
Douglas Gardiner, Head of Environment & Operations
Kenny Gillespie, Head of Housing & Communities
Iain Henderson, Legal & Procurement Manager
Paul Kettrick, Head of Investment, Assets & Climate
Kenneth Lawrie, Chief Executive
Laura Lowrie, Locality Manager
Michael McGuinness, Head of Growth, Planning, Sport & Leisure
Jim Millar, Team Leader, Committee Services
Colin Moodie, Chief Governance Officer
Barry Neill, Waste Manager
Charlotte Paterson, Programme Management Co-Ordinator
Laura Smith, Housing Needs Manager
Amanda Templeman, Chief Finance Officer
Carly Toland, Democratic Services Graduate

Also Attending: Councillor Fiona Collie

In accordance with section 43 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 the Convener had directed that the meeting would be conducted by video conference to allow remote attendance by elected members.

EX88. Apologies

There were no apologies intimated.

EX89. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Transparency Statements

Councillor Hannah made a Transparency Statement in relation to Items EX102 and EX103. She stated that she had a connection to these items by reason of having had correspondence with community organisations regarding the transfer process. Having applied the objective test, she stated that she did not consider that she had an interest to declare.

Councillor Deakin made a Transparency Statement in relation to Item EX101. He stated that he had a connection to the item by reason of being a founding member and former chair and spokesperson of the Reinstate Bonnybridge Railway Station group. Having applied the objective test, he stated that he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

Councillor Spears made a Transparency Statement in relation to Items EX102, EX103 and EX104. He stated that he had a connection to these items by reason of having attended meetings with community organisations regarding the transfer process. Having applied the objective test, he stated that he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

EX91. Minutes

Decision

The minutes of the special meeting of the Executive held on 28 November 2024 and of the meeting of the Executive held on 5 December 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

Following a request, the Chief Executive agreed to circulate to all members the response to a letter sent to the Scottish Government regarding funding related to teacher numbers.

EX92. Rolling Action Log

A rolling action log detailing decisions not yet implemented following the previous meeting on 5 December 2024 was provided.

Actions 667 and 683 were the subject of reports on the agenda for the meeting and accordingly fell from the action log.

Decision

The Executive noted the rolling action log.

Councillor Redmond joined the meeting during consideration of the following item.

EX93. Allocations Policy Review

The Executive considered a [report](#) by the Director of Transformation, Communities & Corporate Services which provided information on the Allocations Policy review and invited members to agree changes to the policy following the conclusion of the consultation process.

An amendment had been circulated and published in advance of the meeting. This could be viewed [here](#).

Councillor Bouse, seconded by Councillor Sinclair, moved the recommendations as outlined in the report.

With the consent of the Convener, Councillor Bundy, seconded by Baillie Kerr, adjusted his amendment and moved that the Executive:

- (1) agrees to implement the revised Allocations Policy from 1st April 2025.
- (2) requests that Officers arrange a series of briefings outlining the Council's allocations policy for individuals convicted of violent crime, sexual offences, and drug dealing, as well as outlining the legal framework that the Council has to operate within.

Councillor Bouse, with the agreement of Councillor Sinclair as his seconder, advised that they were prepared to accept Councillor Bundy's amendment.

Decision

The Executive:-

- (1) **agreed to implement the revised Allocations Policy from 1st April 2025.**

- (2) requested that officers arrange a series of briefings outlining the Council's allocations policy for individuals convicted of violent crime, sexual offences, and drug dealing, as well as outlining the legal framework that the Council had to operate within.

EX94. Non-Domestic Rates – Empty Property Relief Policy

The Executive considered a [report](#) by the Director of Transformation, Communities & Corporate Services which presented proposed amendments to the Empty Property Rates Relief policy agreed by Executive on 14 February 2023. It was agreed this policy should be implemented for 2 years (1 April 2023 to 31 March 2025) with a commitment to review the policy during the 2024/25 financial year.

Decision

The Executive agreed to implement the revised Empty Property Relief Policy from 1st April 2025.

EX95. New Town Hall Update

The Executive considered a [report](#) by the Director of Place Services which provided an update on progress of the New Town Hall project and outlined the proposed next stages.

An adjusted motion and amendment had been circulated and published in advance of the meeting. These could be viewed [here](#). The adjusted motion and amendment were further adjusted and circulated to members of the Executive.

Following questions to officers, Councillor Meiklejohn advised that she was prepared to accept Baillie Kerr's adjusted amendment (as reflected in paragraph (9) of the decision).

Accordingly, Councillor Meiklejohn, seconded by Councillor Garner, moved that the Executive:-

- (1) notes the significant progress on the project since the last update, and the next stages to be progressed;
- (2) notes the updated projected capital construction costs, and agrees the £16.348m funding gap would be addressed at the March 2025 budget meeting through the in-principle allocation of service concessions;
- (3) notes that the project would continue to progress based on the outline programme with an estimated £2.5m expenditure in 25/26;

- (4) notes the current estimated operational revenue costs of £1.5m per annum for the facility once opened, and the proposed actions to reduce these costs further;
- (5) notes that until this work concludes an annual operating cost of £1.5m for the venue would be added for the first time to the Council's Financial Strategy commencing for part of financial year 2028/29;
- (6) agrees to a public consultation and direct stakeholder engagement on the proposals. The consultation process should also include a community discussion on naming the New Town Hall, taking in to account the Town's history and heritage. Following which a selection of suggestions for names be brought forward to the Executive for approval, which can then be taken to a public vote;
- (7) notes that the consultation feedback will be used to inform the design development, and that a business case proposal will be presented for approval in 2025/26;
- (8) notes that delivery of the project was integral to the Falkirk and Grangemouth Growth Deal which has secured UK and Scottish Government funding of £100m, and
- (9) agrees that the project be referred to as the New Town Hall until a name has been formally chosen.

Decision

The Executive:-

- (1) noted the significant progress on the project since the last update, and the next stages to be progressed;**
- (2) noted the updated projected capital construction costs, and agreed that the £16.348m funding gap would be addressed at the March 2025 budget meeting through the in-principle allocation of service concessions;**
- (3) noted that the project would continue to progress based on the outline programme with an estimated £2.5m expenditure in 25/26;**
- (4) noted the current estimated operational revenue costs of £1.5m per annum for the facility once opened, and the proposed actions to reduce these costs further;**
- (5) noted that, until this work concludes, an annual operating cost of £1.5m for the venue would be added for the first time to the Council's Financial Strategy commencing for part of financial year 2028/29;**

- (6) agreed to a public consultation and direct stakeholder engagement on the proposals. The consultation process should also include a community discussion on naming the New Town Hall, taking in to account the Town's history and heritage. Following which a selection of suggestions for names be brought forward to the Executive for approval, which can then be taken to a public vote;**
- (7) noted that the consultation feedback would be used to inform the design development, and that a business case proposal would be presented for approval in 2025/26;**
- (8) noted that delivery of the project was integral to the Falkirk and Grangemouth Growth Deal which had secured UK and Scottish Government funding of £100m, and;**
- (9) agreed that the project be referred to as the New Town Hall until a name had been formally chosen.**

EX96. Grangemouth Flood Protection Scheme – Preliminary Decision

The Executive considered a [report](#) by the Director of Place Services which provided an update on the progress of the Grangemouth Flood Protection Scheme (GFPS – ‘the Project’/‘the Scheme’) including progress following notification of the Scheme in accordance with Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 (‘the Act’) and sought a preliminary decision regarding the Scheme in line with the Act.

The Convener advised that in terms of Standing Order 21.2 an officer overview would be provided by the Infrastructure Projects Manager.

The Infrastructure Projects Manager advised of a typographical error within the report. Paragraph 5.10 of the report should read as follows:

“The volume of objections received is low in comparison to the number of parties notified (approx. 0.2%), and the nature of the maintained objections does not generally suggest that the proposed defence alignment should be altered significantly. If this course of action is accepted, Scottish Ministers will determine whether a Public Local Inquiry or local hearing is required for objectors’ comments to be considered further.”

The Infrastructure Projects Manager advised that correspondence had been received from RSPB Scotland on Tuesday 21 January. He advised that within a letter, RSPB Scotland confirmed that two elements of their original objection had been withdrawn, but that the remaining elements of their objection were maintained. No new points of objection had been raised. RSPB Scotland recognised the need for flood protection schemes to mitigate the effects of climate change and they confirmed their willingness to work with the project team in an effort to resolve remaining differences. This new correspondence did not alter the recommendation in the report.

Decision

The Executive:-

- (1) noted progress to date and the objections received following notification of the proposed Scheme;**
- (2) agreed to make a preliminary decision to confirm the Scheme without modification, as per the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009;**
- (3) noted that, in making a preliminary decision to confirm the Scheme without modification, as there are relevant objectors, the Council must notify Scottish Ministers of this decision;**
- (4) noted that upon receiving notice of the Council decision, Scottish Ministers would decide whether they wish to consider the proposed Scheme;**
- (5) noted that based on the Scottish Ministers decision whether or not to call-in the scheme, either a Public Local Inquiry or Local Hearing would be held;**
- (6) noted the establishment of the taskforce with the Scottish Government and activities being progressed; and**
- (7) noted further reports updating on progress would be brought to Executive as appropriate.**

The Committee adjourned at 11:35 and reconvened at 11:55 with all members present as per the sederunt

EX97. Capital Programmes Update Report

The Executive considered a [report](#) by the Director of Transformation, Communities & Corporate Services which provided an update on the 2024/25 General Fund and Housing Capital Programmes.

Decision

The Executive:-

- (1) noted the proposed revised budget for the General Fund Services (£52.5m including TIF) and forecast position for Housing Capital Programme (£55.2m); and**
- (2) noted the appendices in the report including Prudential Indicators.**

EX98. Waste Collections - Bulky Uplift

The Executive considered a [report](#) by the Director of Place Services which sought approval for a proposed change to the bulky waste collection service in response to ongoing financial pressures. This proposal would introduce a 50% discount model for residents in receipt of Council Tax Reduction benefit, maintaining the current provision of one discounted bulky uplift collection per year for qualifying residents. The discount being applied at the point of sale mirrored the current garden waste process.

Decision

The Executive:-

- (1) agreed the adoption of a 50% discount model for the bulky waste collection service for residents on qualifying benefits - replacing the existing one free collection per year;**
- (2) agreed to align the bulky waste service discount model with that of the garden waste service to ensure parity across both offerings; and**
- (3) approved the outlined implementation plan and monitoring framework for the proposed changes.**

EX99. Proposed Community Sport and Leisure Facilities Update

The Executive considered a [report](#) by the Director of Place Services which provided an update on the proposed Community Sport and Leisure facilities for Bo'ness, Denny and Braes following recent stakeholder engagement. The report presented recommendations for these proposed facilities and financial considerations.

Decision

The Executive:-

- (1) noted the stakeholder engagement undertaken and feedback received;**
- (2) noted the updated project proposals for Bo'ness, Denny and Braes to reflect feedback from engagement and the estimated construction costs;**
- (3) agreed to progress the new Community Sport and Leisure facilities at Bo'ness Academy as Phase 1 of the Community Sport and Leisure Investment Programme;**

- (4) agreed to progress the new stand-alone Community Sport and Leisure facility proposal for Denny as Phase 2 of the Community Sport and Leisure Investment Programme;**
- (5) agreed to progress further investigations and development of a detailed business case for the proposed Braes High School Extension (incorporating a Community Sport and Leisure Wing). This recognised the gap in the budget and the requirement to, in principle, allocate service concessions at the February 2025 budget for the project;**
- (6) agreed that, following confirmation of budget at the February meeting, a further update would be brought to Executive on the Braes High School Extension in December 2025 with a view to main works beginning autumn / winter 2026, subject to affordability;**
- (7) agreed to delegate authority to the Director of Place Services to evaluate the revenue consequences and operational management models for Bo'ness and Denny to ensure affordability prior to the award of construction contract. If affordability was not achievable then a further report would be brought to members for further consideration; and**
- (8) noted the findings of the investigations that had been undertaken in relation to pool access during school hours at Bo'ness Academy.**

The Committee adjourned at 13:00 and reconvened at 13:50 with all members present as per the sederunt, with the exception of Councillor Redmond.

As the relevant portfolio holder, under Standing Order 48.1, Councillor Collie joined the meeting during consideration of the following item.

EX100. Framework Agreement for the Provision of Foster Care and Continuing Care Services

The Executive considered a [report](#) by the Director of Education Services which provided details of the proposed contract strategy for the procurement of a new Flexible Framework Agreement for the Provision of Foster Care and Continuing Care Services from 1 April 2025.

Decision

The Executive approved the contract strategy for the Framework Agreement for the Provision of Foster Care and Continuing Care

Services, allowing the procurement exercise to be commenced by Falkirk Council as the contracting authority.

Councillor Redmond joined the meeting during consideration of the following item.

EX101. Motion referred to the Executive under Standing Order 29

Bonnybridge Railway Station

Baillie Buchanan, seconded by Councillor Spears, moved:

That officers bring a full updated report to Council regarding this long-term proposal supported for over 25 years by all members and that the members will decide on whether the support is still there once members have had an opportunity to assess all the information available and also to discuss the possibility of a public consultation.

Decision

The Executive agreed the motion.

EX102. Community Asset Transfer – Former Action Outdoors Centre

The Executive considered a [report](#) by the Director of Place Services which provided details of an application for the Community Asset Transfer of the Former Action Outdoors Centre to Polmont Playgroup.

Decision

The Executive:-

- (1) agreed the full ownership Community Asset Transfer of the former Action Outdoors Centre to Polmont Playgroup at the cost of £1, reflecting the benefits that would derive from the project;**
- (2) agreed that the Director of Place Services would be authorised to prepare and include a condition in the decision notice allowing the Council the option to reacquire the property in line with the circumstances outlined in paragraph 7.16 of the report;**
- (3) agreed that the transfer would be subject to any existing burdens or restrictions in the Council's title together with common ownership with The Grange Centre of the adjacent car park, access road and footpath;**

- (4) agreed to grant a sum of up to £21,419 from the Enablement Fund to support capital improvements to the facility; subject to further assessment set out in paragraph 5.17 of the report;**
- (5) noted that the assessments undertaken confirmed that the proposals were in line with the Council's statutory obligations in terms of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and The Disposal of Land by Local Authorities (Scotland) Regulations 2010; and**
- (6) instructed and authorised the Director of Place Services to issue a decision notice and to agree and conclude all necessary legal arrangements to progress the disposal in accordance with Part 5 of The Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) 2015.**

EX103. Community Asset Transfer - The Grange Community Education Centre

The Executive considered a [report](#) by the Director of Place Services which provided details of an application for the Community Asset Transfer of The Grange Community Education Centre to Falkirk Braes Grange Centre.

Decision

The Executive:-

- (1) agreed the full ownership Community Asset Transfer of The Grange Community Education Centre to Falkirk Braes Grange Centre SCIO at the proposed purchase price of £1 for full ownership of the land requested, reflecting the benefits that would derive from the project;**
- (2) agreed that the Director of Place Services would be authorised to prepare and include a condition in the decision notice allowing the Council the option to reacquire the property in line with the circumstances outlined in paragraph 7.16 of the report;**
- (3) agreed that the transfer would be subject to any existing burdens or restrictions in the Council's title together with common ownership with the former Outdoor Action Centre of the adjacent car park, access road and footpath;**
- (4) agreed to grant a sum of up to £161,595 from the Enablement Fund to support capital improvements to the facility subject to further assessment set out in paragraph 5.20 of the report;**
- (5) noted that the assessments undertaken confirmed that the proposals were in line with the Council's statutory obligations in terms of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and**

The Disposal of Land by Local Authorities (Scotland) Regulations 2010; and

- (6) instructed and authorised the Director of Place Services to issue a decision notice and to agree and conclude all necessary legal arrangements to progress the disposal in accordance with Part 5 of The Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) 2015.**

EX104. Community Asset Transfer - Ettrick Dochart Community Hall

The Executive considered a [report](#) by the Director of Place Services which provided details of an application for the Community Asset Transfer of the Ettrick Dochart Community Hall received from The Ettrick Dochart Community Group.

Decision

The Executive:-

- (1) agreed the Community Asset Transfer of Ettrick Dochart Community Hall to Ettrick Dochart Community Group at a rental of £1 per year for a 20-year lease, reflecting the benefits that would derive from the project;**
- (2) agreed that the lease should be granted on a full repairing and insuring (tenant) basis. The Council would be entitled to bring the lease to an end if the leased subjects were not used for the permitted use narrated in the lease for a period of one year or more;**
- (3) agreed, in principle, to grant up to £179,704 from the Enablement Fund to support capital improvements to the building subject to further assessment set out in paragraph 5.23 of the report;**
- (4) noted that assessments undertaken confirmed that the proposals were in line with the Council's statutory obligations in terms of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and The Disposal of Land by Local Authorities (Scotland) Regulations 2010; and**
- (5) instructed and authorised the Director of Place Services to issue a decision notice and to agree and conclude all necessary legal arrangements to progress the lease transfer in accordance with Part 5 of The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.**

EX105. Storm Éowyn Red Weather Warning Update

The Chief Executive provided an update on arrangements following the announcement of the red weather warning on 23 January, which would be in force from 10:00 until 17:00 on 24 January 2025.

He advised that all non-essential buildings would be closed, including all Falkirk Council schools. Communications would be circulated to staff and the public regarding these arrangements from 14:30 on 23 January 2025.